



### **DNRC/Montana Historical Society Oral History Program**

---

1. Interviewee: Peggy Graveley Kude
2. Interviewer: Bradley Hansen
3. Date of Interview: October 31, 2013
4. Location: Home of Peggy G. Kude, Helena, Montana, United States.

#### **Introduction**

This interview highlights Peggy Kude's memories of growing up in Townsend, Montana, and her experiences teaching school in Lombard, Montana. These memories/experiences help provide a much clearer understanding of the important role women have played in Montana's agricultural and ranching history.

#### **Interview**

**Brad:** I will begin, my name is Brad Hansen and I am in the home of Peggy Kude, in Helena, Montana and it is October 31st 2013, at 6pm. This interview is part of the From the Group Up: Women and Agriculture Oral History Project in Montana. Today we are going to talk a little bit about some of Peggy's memories and experiences growing up in Montana and teaching school in Lombard Montana. Will you please state your full name and then spell it out for the record.

**Peggy:** My name is Peggy Graveley Kude.

**Brad:** Ok, perfect, we can just go ahead and talk about the questions you'd like to talk about. I'll turn it over to you.

**Peggy:** You'd like to know what my childhood was like growing up in Townsend.

**Brad:** Yes.

**Peggy:** It was great. I feel sorry for children who don't grow up in a small town. We had all kinds of freedom. We walked everywhere, we were in and out of the neighbors houses, we played games in the street; it was great growing up in Townsend.

**Brad:** I'll ask a follow up question. How did your parents end up in Montana?

**Peggy:** My parents were born and raised in the Townsend area. My grandfather on my dad's side came to Montana as a gold miner, and my mother's family, I don't know exactly how they got here, but they settled in Deep Creek. That was in the early pioneer days. We've been here for a long, long, time.

**Brad:** Did he strike it rich?

**Peggy:** He did pretty well. He made enough money gold mining to buy the ranch. He did pretty well.

**Brad:** That might be a story for another time.

**Peggy:** That is another story.

**Brad:** So when you were growing up in Townsend, what was school like?

**Peggy:** I don't have anything to compare it to really, but it was a small-town school. Our high school was probably one hundred to one hundred twenty-five students.

**Brad:** And that would be grades...?

**Peggy:** High School when I was growing up was grades 9-12.

**Brad:** Oh, OK, so like it is now in a lot of places.

**Peggy:** Yea, so not too different.

**Peggy:** I think we did probably the same things that most kids in small towns did, like school proms. Once again, freedom, we had more freedom than my children were ever allowed because everybody knew everybody. We were pretty safe.

**Brad:** That is very interesting. I've heard that same phrase "freedom" or "independence" used by other people who've grown up in rural communities. Can you explain what you mean by "freedom?"

**Peggy:** I think that because we felt safe, we were allowed to go, and that our parents felt comfortable letting us run the streets. That's probably a bad phrase, but that's basically what we did. We spent a lot of time meeting and greeting, but we were in our neighborhood. We knew

all the neighbors. Everybody knew everybody; it wasn't like when I moved to Helena, it was quite different.

**Brad:** I can imagine. Very good. Let's go on to the next question, talking more about agriculture, because Townsend was very much an agricultural community and ranching community.

**Peggy:** Yes, I imagine that's probably why we have Townsend. It is because of the agriculture around there.

**Brad:** This next question is kind of open ended. What role did ranching and agriculture play in the community?

**Peggy:** Like I said, because the ranchers and farmers that surrounded the area probably needed a place where they could get groceries, where they could go to the bar, where they could buy merchandise, do business, they needed a bank. That is probably the reason Townsend came to be. We even had a small theatre.

**Brad:** Do you know what people were growing? When we say agriculture and ranching, were there some staple crops that people grew in the area you were in?

**Peggy:** My family was into cattle, so we had a place, a ranch, where the cattle were, and a ranch where we grew hay to feed the cattle. There were sugar beets; they grew a lot of sugar beets, a lot of potatoes, those kinds of crops. Wheat and grain, too, I'm sure there were wheat and grain crops there. I was a townie, so I don't remember everything about farming.

**Brad:** Sure, and that's one of the other reasons why I wanted to interview you, because you might have a different perspective. You grew up in town in an agricultural community, and at the same time you told me that your dad commuted to the ranch. We can skip down to one of the other questions while we are on this topic. What do you remember about that ranch?

**Peggy:** It was a huge ranch, and I asked my sister today, but I can't remember what the acreage would have been, but it was large. We ran cattle on the ranch. It was on what would be the north end of what is now Canyon Ferry Lake. Canyon Ferry wasn't there originally. But it would be near Confederate Gulch, in that area.

**Brad:** Did your family have a name for the ranch?

**Peggy:** Just the Graveley Ranch, because my granddad owned it originally, so it's always been the Graveley Ranch until recently.

**Brad:** Another question I have here is: how did your father and his brothers come about buying the ranch? Was it after your granddad passed away?

**Peggy:** No, but my granddad was older, and my grandmother had passed away. My granddad just wasn't up to doing the ranch work and taking care of it. So then my dad and one of his brothers went in together and bought it. My dad previously had owned a grain elevator in Townsend. He and his brother, who had been working in a ship building factory in Bremerton, and then he moved back to Townsend, and he and my dad got together and bought the ranch.

**Brad:** Was that a dream of theirs?

**Peggy:** I think yes, probably. I don't really know, but I'd say it probably was. I think farm kids have that in their blood. They always want to go back to the farm. I don't know why. We also had a hay farm at Canton, so we had two different pieces of ground. At Canton, we raised hay to feed the cattle, and in the summer time we would go out to the ranch at Canton. There was a ramshackle old house on this property that my mother would move into and clean up so we could live there. It was like camping out. We had kerosene lights which my brother and sister and I thought was a big deal. We read by kerosene long before television and probably a little before hi-fi even.

**Brad:** Is this the summer you cooked for the hay crew? You mentioned this.

**Peggy:** Yes, my mother cooked for the hay crew. My mother was kind of the errand boy, the cook, the everything. She drove a lot. My grandmother didn't drive, and so whenever there had to be a trip to town to rustle up a hired man who had spent his paycheck in town and forgot to come back, my mother would be the one who was sent to bring this guy back to the ranch. So anyway, when my mother cooked for the hay crew she would get this house cleaned up so we could go out there and live for a couple of weeks. I don't remember how long it took, but my sister remembers us spending several summers there. I only remember one summer when my brother and I were teenagers. All we could think about mostly was getting to town. It was a big deal to get out of there and get to town. And my dad hayed with horses. I remember that.

**Brad:** How does that work?

**Peggy:** As I recall there were big forks, big wooden forks, and the horses pulled something out and this fork would go up and dump the hay. They would cut the hay with horses. They used a mowing machine. It would mow the hay and then they would rake it, and then this big thing would rake it up. This is probably a very bad explanation, but as a kid that's how I remember it happening.

**Brad:** When you were there with your mother do you remember much of what you did? What responsibilities you had?

**Peggy:** We had a little white poodle, and at one time my grandfather had pigs on that ranch. There was a slew that was just really awful and this little white dog would run down to that slew every day. One of my jobs was keeping the dog clean. My brother and I always had the packages of Olio. Do you know what Olio is? It was a margarine. Margarine didn't always come in a nice little tub like we get it now. It came in a cellophane sack that was put inside a

cardboard box. You would take it out and it had a color cube, a little colored dot that you would mix it. It looked like Crisco when you first got it. And then you would mix this color into it. So my brother and I would toss it back and forth to mix the color. We did this to make it fun, because it was quite boring.

**Brad:** Very interesting.

**Peggy:** I also helped my mother set the table, and helped my mother with the meals. My brother helped my dad with the haying.

**Brad:** About how long would you stay there? A few months? Or the whole summer?

**Peggy:** I don't know, as long as it took to cut the hay and stack it. Probably two or three weeks at most.

**Brad:** That's still a good amount of time to be away from home.

**Peggy:** We actually went back and forth because Canton was close.

**Brad:** This may be one of the questions you don't remember, but did you get the sense when you were young that there were strict gender roles between women and men? Were these gender roles ever blurred?

**Peggy:** I think they were blurred. Like I said, my mother got stuck with a lot of jobs that I'm sure other women didn't do. I think women had their role. Mom cooked for the hay crew and dad put up the hay, that kind of thing, but I think at that time maybe those roles were starting to blend a little bit. As far as my dad was concerned, my mother could do pretty much what she wanted.

**Brad:** Would you consider him a progressive minded guy or more conservative?

**Peggy:** I think he was pretty conservative, but still, my mother was fiercely independent and she had to be. She lost her parents, both of them, by the time she was fourteen. She and her sister and brother were left orphans. She always had to kind of fend for herself. So I think that made a difference. You know my mom worked at a time when everyone said "oh you grew up in the 40s and 50s and your mom was at home with you," but ours wasn't. She worked with my dad at the elevator. She did book work. She worked with my dad at the ranch. She was out a lot.

**Brad:** When she saw something that needed to be done, she got it done. Do you remember about what year this was? Was it the 1940s before WWII?

**Peggy:** WWII was over in 1945, yes, so I would have been thirteen when that war was over. So it would have probably been a little after the war.

**Brad:** That raises another question. Do you remember much about the war? Did it affect your family? Did it affect the community?

**Peggy:** The war?

**Brad:** Yes.

**Peggy:** Well like I said I was thirteen.

**Brad:** Yes you were young.

**Peggy:** I remember being terrified; having nightmares about what the Japanese soldiers would do to you. We heard horrible stories about the Japanese people. We had a lot of young men in Townsend that went to the war, who I knew who they were. A few didn't come back. I remember having nightmares about the war and being scared. I don't know why. I was young enough, I guess, that I didn't doubt for a minute that they could come to our country and do us harm?

**Brad:** You were scared for a good reason. That was a terrible war in many ways. That is very interesting that you would remember the nightmares all these years later. That is very powerful.

**Brad:** Ok, I guess we are moving away from your younger teenage years up to when you taught school in Lombard, which is one of the things I'm very excited to hear more about. First of all, before we get into the questions, did you know that you wanted to be a school teacher? And what led up to you becoming a school teacher?

**Peggy:** Well, when I graduated from high school my dad was still alive and he said "you can either go to school, or you can go to work." The idea of going to work was really not what I had in mind, so we agreed that I would go to school. I went to Western in Dillon. I actually went the summer I got out of high school. My parents could hardly wait to get me out of town; I don't know what that was about. I started school that summer. I went that full year and then when I started the next quarter my dad unexpectedly passed away. He was only 40 years old when he died and it was so traumatic that I couldn't handle that and so I ended up dropping out of school when I was a sophomore. I didn't really have any intention of teaching school. However, my mother didn't want me home and thought I needed to have a job. I don't know how it came about, but the superintendent of schools was desperate for teachers in rural schools. It was kind of like now, no-one wanted to teach in rural schools, I guess.

**Brad:** And this was around 1951?

**Peggy:** I quit school in 1951. In September of 1951, the superintendent of schools in Townsend offered me the job thinking that I was a step ahead of anything else they had, I guess. I don't know. I was eighteen or nineteen. Anyway, I ended up going to Lombard and teaching. It was a one room schoolhouse with a piano. I taught 3 little boys, their parents were all railroad workers. The daddies were railroad workers and the mommies were homemakers. The little boys were in grades one, five, and eight. I was terrified. I lived in a boxcar which had been remodeled into the semblance of a house. There was a kitchen area with a pump in the sink. There was a sink

that I had to pump water, and there was a bedroom. It was kind of a kitchen-living-room arrangement, I recall. It was painted yellow and blue. I'll never forget that, the paint job on this thing. I don't know what it would have been like had I stayed through the cold winter. I can't even imagine. Anyway, that was the teachery. The bathroom was outside, which in itself was a little scary. Needless to say, 19 years old, I was not altogether thrilled with my arrangement. Here again, every time I got a chance I went to town. Anyway, what did you teach was one of the questions you asked. I had books for each one of the classes and I just taught from the book. That's all I knew to do.

**Brad:** Who created the textbooks or curriculum back then?

**Peggy:** I don't remember.

**Brad:** That's fine.

**Peggy:** Houghton Mifflin, probably. I think that was most of the books that I had. The students were darling boys. They were very helpful. My favorite was probably the little one. He had a little sister. I remember his little sister came to visit and we were getting ready for Christmas. We were doing Christmas songs and I played the piano just enough to get by, so that we could do that. We were getting ready to do a little program for the parents. I remember that.

**Brad:** Very interesting.

**Peggy:** It was a brief but interesting time. I was there from September until Christmas time. Then my husband came to visit his father.

**Brad:** You didn't know he was your husband then.

**Peggy:** He wasn't my husband then, no.

**Brad:** So what happened? You have to tell us.

**Peggy:** Well, this guy, this young soldier came. By the way, the trains went through Lombard, and there was a NP Railroad and a Milwaukee railroad. Those trains were carrying troops through at that time, because of the Korean War. It was just starting up.

**Brad:** Would they be heading to the West Coast?

**Peggy:** I suppose, to Seattle. Anyway, when Kip came to visit his father who was a railroad foreman, we got together and I ended up quitting my job and getting married and moving to Tacoma in very short order.

**Brad:** You must have known he was the right guy.

**Peggy:** I thought he was the right guy at the time, I sure did. And I haven't regretted it.

**Brad:** Very good.

**Brad:** That is extremely interesting. We covered some really great topics. Looking back now on that part of your life, is there anything growing up in rural Montana that shaped your worldview still today?

**Peggy:** I don't know that growing up in Montana shaped my worldview? What do you mean by worldview? My philosophy?

**Brad:** I guess that could be a better question.

**Brad:** Yes, your outlook on life, or philosophy.

**Peggy:** Yes I suppose growing up in rural Montana gave me a better sense of community, maybe more than I would have, and responsibility. Although it doesn't sound like it from this (interview), like I had any sense of responsibility, any sense period.

**Brad:** (Laughter.)

**Peggy:** My dad came from a very protective mother. My mother, on the other hand, was very independent and believed in what you get and to fight for yourself, to take care of yourself.

**Brad:** Clearly it rubbed off on you. By the age of 19 you were by yourself in a one room school house teaching. I think that is pretty independent.

**Peggy:** Yes somewhat independent. Lombard was not that far from home and so on weekends I could go home. It was getting through those weeks that were difficult.

**Brad:** That gets us to this last question: how did your upbringing, and upbringing can mean a lot of different things, but in particular, how did your mother influence you and the decisions you made later in life?

**Peggy:** Again, I think my mother probably taught us to be independent. From my dad I think we got looking out for other people as well as ourselves. From my mother we got independence. I don't know how else to explain it. And I also think that a lot of what I believe now, and what I believed as I grew up, came from what I read as well as what I learned in the small town.

**Brad:** What you read as in books and schooling?

**Peggy:** Yes, and even national news and things that you pick up as you go along, the newspapers. I was in my 50s when I went to work at Carroll College and I think I learned a lot while I was at Carroll.

**Brad:** For sure.



**Peggy:** You can't work at a college and not smarten up a little bit.

**Brad:** Very good. We have covered everything that I have here. Is there anything that you would like to add before we finish?

**Peggy:** I can't think of anything. I hope there is something you can use, and I will certainly will be understanding if you can't.

**Brad:** I think that this has been very good. It will be helpful to add your voice to other womens' who have grown up in Montana.

**Peggy:** And who did not elope after knowing a guy for two weeks.

**Brad:** Ha, ha, yes.